

THIRD REPORT

OF A

COMMITTEE

Glasgow — OF THE

CHAMBER

23 OF

COMMERCE AND MANUFACTURES

IN

GLASGOW,

RELATIVE TO THE

CORN - LAWS.

GLASGOW:

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THIRD REPORT of a Committee of the Chamber
of Commerce and Manufactures in Glasgow, re-
lative to the CORN LAWS.

SINCE this business was last under the consideration of your Committee, the Chamber has been favoured, *by direction of the Marquis of Graham*, and some of their other correspondents, with several copies of the Representation of the Lords of the Committee of his Majesty's Council for Trade, "upon the present state of the laws for regulating the importation and exportation of Corn: And submitting to his Majesty's consideration some farther provisions, which are wanting to amend and improve these laws."—And they have observed, that the greatest part of the regulations proposed by their Lordships have since been adopted by the Committee of the House of Commons on the Corn Laws.

The Act of the last Session of Parliament, (29 Geo. III. c. 58.) for regulating the importation and exportation of Corn in England and Wales, being made the basis of these new regulations, which, it is proposed, shall be extended to Scotland; we shall therefore lay before the Chamber a more particular statement of that law than has hitherto been thought necessary.

It is proper to premise, that, from the year 1774, till of late, the importation and exportation of Corn was regulated all over Britain, according to the prices in each county or port separately, agreeable to the Act of the 13 Geo. III. c. 43. which is still in force with regard to Scotland.—The first alteration

made on this law in England, was by the 21 Geo. III. c. 50. which regulated importation and exportation in the port of London, and the counties of Kent and Essex, by an average of the prices at the Corn Exchange in the city of London, made up and ascertained by the *Inspector of Corn Returns*; (an Officer created by that Act,) from returns of these prices made to him weekly by two Corn Factors chosen by lot, from those employed in the sale of Grain.—The Act of last Session made some alterations on that law, and extended the principle of it over the whole of England and Wales.—By this Act, the county of Sussex is added to the London district, in which the exportation and importation continues to be regulated by the average of the London prices, made up by the Inspector, not from the returns of two Corn Factors, as formerly, but from returns made by all those employed in the sale of Grain in London and the Suburbs. The other maritime counties of England and Wales are divided into eleven districts, in each of which the importation and exportation is regulated by an average of the prices within the same, made up at London by the *Receiver of Corn Returns*, (an Officer created by the Act 10 Geo. III. c. 39.) from returns of these prices made to him weekly by certain Officers created by this Act, called *Inspectors of the prices of Corn Returns*, from a certain number of markets in each district; such markets being fixed, and these Inspectors appointed by the Justices of the Peace at the Michaelmas Quarter Sessions.—The *Receiver of Corn Returns* is appointed to transmit, weekly, to his Majesty's Collector, or other chief officer in each district, the week's account and average, as a rule for the exportation and payment of the bounty in that district, till a new account and average be received by him; and, in like manner, to transmit, quarterly, to the same officer, an average

of the prices of all kinds of Grain, except Oats, for the last six weeks, and an average of the price of Oats for the last thirteen weeks, as a rule for the duties payable on importation of foreign Corn and Grain, till a new average be received by him; the prices for regulating exportation, and payment of the bounty, and also those for regulating the duties on importation, being continued the same as by the former law.

It is this new law which it was found necessary to break through, by a proclamation, before the end of the year, and for which an act of indemnity was passed this session of Parliament. The propriety, and even necessity of this proclamation is stated in a preface to the representation now before us, part of which we take the liberty to transcribe.

“ In a former representation to his Majesty, presented about the middle of last December, it was shewn, that the price of Wheat, taken on an average from the several markets of England, was, at that time, fifty-two shillings per quarter:—That the price of Wheat, as taken from the market of Amsterdam, which is a free market for Corn, and affords therefore the best criterion of the medium price of Europe, was, by the lowest estimation, ten shillings higher per quarter:—That the prices of Corn, in other foreign countries, were much higher than in ordinary years:—That the old stock of Wheat was nearly exhausted, in most parts, by the demands of the foregoing year:—That bounties were given by the Municipality of Paris, on Wheat brought into the said city; and that bounties were paid, as well by the Government of France, as by the Municipalities of many of the great towns situated upon the coast, on Wheat imported therein:—That in

“ Spain, all duties on Corn imported were taken off,
 “ and that bounties were given on Wheat and Indian
 “ Corn imported into that kingdom:—That the ex-
 “ port of Wheat had been prohibited from some of
 “ the Northern Countries, from whence great quan-
 “ tities of that article are usually drawn, for the sup-
 “ ply of the Southern Countries of Europe:—That,
 “ in expectation of a scarcity, many Governments had
 “ formed magazines for the sustenance of their sub-
 “ jects; and That contracts had been made with mer-
 “ chants of England for the delivery of American
 “ Wheat at sixty-two and sixty-five shillings per quar-
 “ ter, and for the delivery of American flour, at sixty
 “ shillings per sack, on its arrival in the Channel.

“ It was also shown that from a failure in the exe-
 “ cution of an act past in the last Session of Parlia-
 “ ment, there was at that time no law in force, suffi-
 “ cient to prevent the exportation of Corn, whatever
 “ the price might be, or to permit the importation
 “ upon low duties, if it should be found necessary.

In the representation which follows that preface,
 their Lordships state, though without any formal di-
 vision of the subject; 1st, Certain facts showing the
 expediency of revising our Corn Laws, and the
 principles by which, in their Lordships opinion, such
 laws ought to be regulated: 2dly, In what respects
 these laws are defective, and what amendments ought
 to be made on them, so as to make them correspond
 with the principles before stated. Each of these par-
 ticulars is treated in a manner so perspicuous and
 able, that we would wish to transcribe the whole pa-
 per, but this would exceed the bounds which we
 must prescribe to ourselves in the present Report.
 We shall therefore confine ourselves to a few extracts,
 and a short statement of some other particulars, which

appear to us of such importance as to demand the immediate attention of the Chamber, to which we shall add such remarks and observations as have occurred to ourselves on the points before us, which we understand to have been the purpose of communicating the representation; leaving it to such as desire further information to have recourse to the representation itself, which we recommend to the perusal of all who interest themselves in this important business.

Their Lordships attention was called to this subject from observing a great change in the circumstances of this country; it appearing from accounts laid before them "that this kingdom, which in former times used to produce more Corn than was necessary for the consumption of its inhabitants, has of late years been under the necessity of depending on foreign countries for a part of its supply." In proof of this, their Lordships state, that while upon an average of nineteen years from 1746 to 1765, the nett returns to the nation for the Grain exported is supposed to have been no less than 651,000*l.* per annum; so great is the subsequent change of circumstances, that on an average of eighteen years, from 1770 to 1788, it appears that this country paid to foreign nations no less than 291,000*l.* per annum for Corn to supply its inhabitants.

We are satisfied that this extraordinary change is to be imputed, as their Lordships observe, "to an increased population; to the number of horses and other cattle, which we now breed and maintain, more than formerly; and to that opulence which has generally diffused itself among all ranks of men, from the extension of our trade and manufac-

“ tures, which has occasioned an increased consumption of all the necessaries of life.”—For we know, that agriculture so far from declining, has within these thirty years, been very much improved, at least in many parts of Scotland, and several of the northern counties of England; and we believe pretty generally over every part of Britain: This change therefore, which might at first sight appear unfavourable to the country, is in reality, the most unquestionable evidence of its growing improvement and opulence.—And while we continue to prosper, in the same ratio, we may lay our account with finding the importation of Corn gradually increasing, nor can it decrease, but with the decline of the population, wealth, and importance of the nation.

Their Lordships declare themselves “ further impressed with the importance of this subject, and “ the more induced to think that it requires immediate attention, as from accounts they have received of the produce and consumption of Corn in “ most European countries, they are inclined to believe, that in ordinary years, the produce of Corn “ in Europe, is not more than equal to the consumption of its inhabitants; and that whenever “ the crops fail, in any degree, the deficiency can “ only be supplied from the harvests of America;” a fact which merits the most serious consideration.

Having stated these facts, their Lordships express their opinion, “ That the principles which are best “ adapted for the conduct and regulation of other “ trades, cannot, in every respect, be applied to this “ of Corn: Other trades in general produce only “ the comforts and conveniences of life—This has “ for its object an article that is indispensably necessary for subsistence. If they at any time decline,

“ some individuals may be affected in their fortunes,
 “ and the public can only suffer a temporary loss and
 “ inconvenience;—but a mistaken speculation in the
 “ trade of Corn may produce dearth;—the conse-
 “ quence of which will always be general distress,
 “ and sometimes popular commotions: So that in
 “ the management of this trade, Government ought
 “ ever to have in view, not only the prosperity of the
 “ trade itself, and the interests of those concerned in
 “ it, but the subsistence of the people.

“ The best market for Corn, in every country, is
 “ the home market; and the circulation of it within
 “ every kingdom ought to be free, so that the surplus
 “ of one part may supply the deficiencies of the other;
 “ and that the price, throughout the whole country,
 “ may be brought as near as possible to a level.

“ To facilitate the circulation of Corn, this king-
 “ dom enjoys peculiar advantages, which arise from
 “ its situation as an island; from the number of its
 “ canals, and the excellence of its roads; and by
 “ these means the populous and manufacturing coun-
 “ ties, in some parts of the island, can draw the ne-
 “ cessary supplies from other parts which are less
 “ populous, but more productive of Corn.

“ In other countries magazines of Corn are form-
 “ ed by their respective Governments, or by the prin-
 “ cipal Magistrates of great cities, as a resource in
 “ times of scarcity. This country has no such insti-
 “ tution—The stores of Corn are here deposited in
 “ the barns and stacks of wealthy farmers, and in
 “ the magazines of merchants and dealers in Corn,
 “ who ought to be by no means restrained, but ra-
 “ ther encouraged in laying up stores of this nature,
 “ as, after a deficient crop, they are thereby enabled

“ to divide the inconvenience arising from it as equal-
 “ ly as possible through every part of the year; and
 “ by checking improvident consumption in the be-
 “ ginning of scarcity, prevent a famine, which might
 “ otherwise happen before the next harvest. The in-
 “ land trade of Corn therefore ought to be perfectly
 “ free—This freedom can never be abused—To sup-
 “ pose that there can be a monopoly of so bulky and
 “ perishable a commodity, dispersed through so many
 “ hands over every part of the country, is an idle
 “ and vain apprehension. The ancient laws of this
 “ kingdom, which, by a false policy, restrained the
 “ inland trade of Corn, have in general been repeal-
 “ ed. The 15 Cha. II. c. 7. which does not permit
 “ the buying Corn to sell again, and the laying it up
 “ in granaries, except when the several sorts of Corn
 “ are below certain prices therein mentioned, is the
 “ only law of this description which will now be
 “ found in our statute-book, and ought certainly not
 “ to remain there any longer.”

We heartily subscribe to these principles, which
 appear to be founded in wisdom and sound policy:—
 And we beg leave to add, that, for the same reason,
 the Scots laws which lay restraints on the inland trade
 of Corn, ought to be repealed.

It is both with diffidence and regret that we presume
 to differ from some of the subsequent principles or
 conclusions stated by their Lordships—But convin-
 ced as we are, that freedom in the import and ex-
 port of Corn, as well as in the home trade, at least a
 much greater degree of freedom than what seems in-
 tended by the proposed regulations, would best pro-
 mote the true interest of all ranks and professions in
 the nation, we think the explanation of our senti-

ments a duty which we owe to the Chamber, to our fellow-citizens, and to our country.

Their Lordships, after stating, as already quoted, the advantages arising from a perfectly free inland trade in Corn, add, "But to extend the freedom of this trade to an unrestrained export of Corn to foreign countries, would, in the opinion of the Committee, be productive of the greatest evils; such export might, in a year of general scarcity, exhaust the stock of any kingdom, and deprive its inhabitants of what is necessary for their subsistence, by sending it for the supply of other nations." In support of this proposition their Lordships state, that in the course of last year, most of the countries of Europe, and even Hamburgh, Holland, and particularly the town of Amsterdam, which being free markets for Corn, are generally appealed to for a proof that a free trade in Corn with foreign countries can occasion no inconvenience to the inhabitants—all found it necessary, directly or indirectly, to prevent an unlimited exportation; and that such was the industry and artifice employed by the merchants, and even by the Ministers of many countries, to break thro' these restraints, and draw supplies from their neighbours, that had it not been for his Majesty's provident interposition, the people of this country would have been deprived of the advantage they now enjoy of purchasing this necessary article of subsistence at a much cheaper rate than those of any neighbouring nations.

Here we beg leave to observe, that, the instances in point of fact and reasoning on them, thus brought in support of a restraint on exportation, all refer to last season, the like of which, for general scarcity, has not occurred above once or twice in a century; and for providing against which, it seems impossible

to frame any general laws.—We readily allow, that in such extraordinary cases, a restraint on exportation, such as that imposed by his Majesty's proclamation, is just and necessary, being founded on the principle of self-preservation.—But we do humbly maintain, that in justice to the farmer and landholder, no other restraint should be laid on exportation; and indeed, that no other species of restraint will prove effectual, as was evident from the insufficiency of the present laws on the late occasion.—The only limit, therefore, set to a free exportation, ought, in our humble opinion, to be a power, vested in his Majesty in Council, to restrain it on the like emergencies; which has already been proved to be the only effectual mode, and which must prove as much so, though the exportation were in every other respect free, as it can do under the proposed limitations.

It was no doubt intended by our Corn Laws, as observed by their Lordships, “First to secure a reasonable price at all times to the farmer, and, in the next place, to prevent the price being, at any time, so high as to distress the poor and the manufacturer.” With a view to the first of these objects their Lordships observe, “That no market will be plentifully supplied with Corn, unless some liberty is given of disposing to profit of the surplus for which there may be no demand; without this liberty the farmer would endeavour so to contrive, as to produce no more Corn than could be sold in the home-market at a reasonable profit, and his speculations would extend no further; the consequence would be, that he would frequently produce less than the home-market would demand, and scarcity must some times ensue; for it has been found by experience, that a very small deficiency of crop, will raise the price in a very high degree.”—And from

this their Lordships conclude, “ That it is right to
 “ allow the exportation of Corn, whenever it is sold
 “ under a certain price.”

All parties are agreed in this general proposition, and we have already expressed our opinion, that no limit should be set to that freedom of exportation, except a discretionary power vested in his Majesty in Council, to restrain it on extraordinary occasions. But their Lordships go farther—“ It is not necessary,” say they, “ to offer any thing in vindication of that policy, which commenced at the Revolution, of encouraging, by bounty, this exportation, and which the Legislature has thought fit to continue to the present time.” Their Lordships add, “ Whatever doubts may be entertained by some, of the wisdom of this measure, it cannot surely be prudent to alter it at present;” and then state the fact, that agriculture has progressively increased and flourished from the time when this bounty was first granted; (though it is allowed that other causes have been assigned for this improvement,) adding a number of other circumstances as reasons for continuing the bounty, at least for the present.

It is well known, that this Chamber has long been of a very different opinion.—We think it unnecessary to enter at present on any particular consideration of the circumstances and reasoning brought in support of the above proposition; except observing, that the whole proceeds on the supposition, that Britain may, in common years, always reckon upon having a surplus of Corn to export, more than is sufficient for the supply at home.—Even were such the case, though the bounty would, unquestionably, be less hurtful, we should doubt very much of its proving beneficial, or even innocent.—But, after it has been

proved in so satisfactory a manner, that notwithstanding the late rapid improvements in agriculture, the population and consumption of the country has so far outstript it, as not only to require all the Corn raised in the Island, but also an additional importation to the value of near 300,000*l.* per annum more to supply the inhabitants; we must be forgiven in saying, that to continue the bounty, and thereby, at considerable expence to the public, encourage and force, as it were, the exportation of Corn from the country, which must again be imported or otherwise replaced at an additional expence, with a great deal more, for the necessary subsistence of the people, cannot be easily reconciled to reason or sound policy.—Their Lordships may have had good reasons for advising a continuation of the bounty *for the present*; but we must declare ourselves utterly unacquainted with them; nor after the light which their Lordships have thrown upon this very important subject, can we entertain a doubt, that all concerned will soon be of the same opinion with this Chamber.

After what has been said in our former Reports, it is scarce necessary to mention our grounds of objection to the continuation of the bounty.—It has, in our humble opinion, been demonstrated, that no benefit worth counting on has been derived from the bounty even to the Corn Counties; as the chief effect of it must have been to enhance the price to the consumer, and of course to raise that of every species of manufacture and other article of consumption, so that the Farmer and Landholder lose just as much by the last, as they gain by the first; while, on the other hand, every circumstance which enhances the price of our manufactures, must limit our powers of competition in foreign markets, where the bounty on exportation enables their manufacturers to eat our Corn

on equal, and sometimes lower terms than we do ourselves.—It has ever been accounted wise policy in a manufacturing nation, to encourage the importation of the raw materials of their manufactures on as low terms as possible; but this has been entirely lost sight of, in the instance before us; as the direct tendency of the bounty, and many other of our Corn regulations is, artificially, to enhance the price of the most necessary and important of all materials, the bread and subsistence of our labourers and manufacturers.

It may be proper here to take notice of a remark mentioned by their Lordships, “that, in manufacturing towns, there is more regularity of conduct, and more productive industry, when Corn is not at a price unusually low.”—This sobriety and industry, however, is not, in our opinion, to be imputed to such price being high, but to its being correspondent to that medium value on which the price of labour must be computed; as manufacturers, and all other labourers are uniformly found most sober and industrious when their wages are sufficient to make them live comfortably, without admitting of idleness or dissipation.—In this country, therefore, where the value of Corn is, by the force of the regulations, kept above its natural rate, the medium on which wages must be computed is necessarily proportionally high, and the labourers and manufacturers will, of course, be found most sober and industrious when the price of Corn corresponds to that rather high medium rate.—But if the price of Corn were not thus artificially kept up, the medium would be lower, the wages, of course, would be reduced, and the manufacturers would be found equally sober and industrious, when the actual prices of Corn corresponded to this low medium, as when it at present corresponds to the high one, with this important difference, that the articles

produced would come proportionally cheaper to the consumer at home, and go with infinitely more advantage into the competition in foreign markets.

But though the country where Corn, and of course the wages of labour are comparatively low, has thus (other things being equal) so great and obvious advantages over all others, where these are higher, yet the sobriety and industry of the manufacturers, while they have employment, does not depend so much on the medium to which their wages correspond, being comparatively high or low, as on the actual price being steadily kept at or about that medium whatever it be. Their Lordships express their sense of the truth and importance of this observation in their concluding paragraph on this branch of the subject—"The policy," say they, "of our laws has produced an effect highly advantageous, both to the grower and consumer of Corn, by rendering the vicissitudes of plenty and dearth less frequent than they were formerly, *and by making the price of Corn more steady and uniform.*" We have already stated the reasons of our opinion that no benefit has been derived to the grower, and much less to the consumer, from the effect which these laws have to keep the price above the natural rate; and we are extremely sorry that we cannot persuade ourselves that they have the other effect imputed to them, of rendering the prices steady and uniform—The abundance occasioned by a plentiful crop is surely always to be accounted a blessing, as it not only affords the supplies of the year, but, if the trade were left to its natural course, would leave a surplus "in the barns and stacks of wealthy farmers, and in the magazines of merchants and dealers in Corn," as their Lordships have before expressed it, to make up for the deficiency of a more unfavourable season

and scanty harvest.—But, the effect of the bounty is to *force* away this surplus in the years of plenty, so that when the scanty season arrives, nothing remains to make up the deficiency, and the whole additional supplies wanted, must be imported at a great and accumulated expence to the nation, first in bounties paid to force off the surplus, and then in the cost and charges of a much greater importation than would otherwise have been necessary.—Add to this, that when importation is necessary, the merchants and dealers in Corn, would, if the trade were free, import by degrees for the supply of the country, such quantities only, as they found could be disposed of at a moderate profit; whereas, under the present regulations, the uncertainty of the opening and shutting of the ports is such, that the merchant is sometimes deterred from ordering the quantity necessary for the supply of the inhabitants, least on arrival the ports should be found shut; and is, at other times, induced to hurry in too much, when the ports are open, lest a subsequent shutting of them should prevent the importation of the necessary quantity; thus producing in the one case a dearth, and in the other a glut, with all those consequent vicissitudes, so unfavourable to sobriety and industry among the manufacturers and labourers.—In a word, the tendency of our present laws, instead of answering the purpose of promoting uniformity and steadiness in the price of Corn, have a direct contrary effect, occasioning such irregularity and uncertainty that the trade in Corn has become more an object of speculation than that regular branch of commerce, which, alone, is consistent with the safety of the people and the true interest of the nation.

It ought therefore to be the first object of every one who wishes well to the happiness and prosperity

of his country, to restore that regularity and steadiness to the Corn trade, which is so essentially necessary to these ends, and which the operation of our present laws has so much deranged.—In this view, the repeal of the restraints on the inland trade, advised by their Lordships, is surely a wise measure, and some other regulations may no doubt be devised as palliatives, even under the present system of laws.—But nothing can, in our humble opinion, have the desired effect, short of a perfect freedom, or at least a much greater degree of it, even with foreign countries, than hitherto seems intended.—It is this consideration which induced us to suggest, that for the encouragement of the farmer, no limits should be set to the freedom of exportation, except a power vested in his Majesty in Council, to restrain it when the prices exceed certain rates fixed as high as to the wisdom of Parliament should seem proper.—And with the same view, we mentioned in our former Report, and now repeat the same observation, that it would be the interest of this country, for the sake of uniformity and steadiness in the markets, rather to submit to a moderate duty on importation, provided the bounty were abolished or considerably diminished, and no other restraint imposed on importation, rather than continue under the present laws—Such a plan, while it brought a considerable revenue to Government, would, in our humble opinion, greatly simplify the execution of the law, and best promote the views of the farmer, because less liable to be evaded; and, at the same time, as the merchant could then import, whenever the circumstances of the country required it, the people might depend on the necessary supplies much more certainly, though possibly somewhat dearer, than under the capricious and sometimes abused operations of the present law; and on such a plan there seems

no other regulation to be required, unless it be, that his Majesty in Council should have authority, as advised by their Lordships, not only to restrain exportation, but to allow importation on lower duties, or even free of duty, when prices came to be very high.

We must allow, that neither this nor any other scheme, of which either the bounty or duty make a part, can be reconciled to the circumstances of a country such as this has been proved to be, which requires not only all the Corn produced at home, but a great additional quantity by importation, for the necessary supply of the inhabitants ;—and we request it may be observed, that we propose it not as a remedy, but as the best palliative that occurs to us, while the present system of Corn Laws, or any modification of it is continued.

We have only to add on this branch of the representation, that we have no such apprehensions as these expressed by some that the abolition of the bounty, and making the trade in Corn free, would have any unfavourable effects on the agriculture of the country ; for it has been proved that the demand in the home market is more than sufficient to consume all the Corn produced in the country ; and it seems both unnecessary and cruel, to force into foreign countries, what is absolutely necessary for the inhabitants of our own.

Their Lordships having traced the principles, by which, in their opinion, the Corn Trade ought to be regulated, and to which our Corn Laws appear in general to conform, proceed to consider in what respect these laws are defective, and what amendments

ought to be made on them, so as to make them fully correspond with the principles before stated.

Under this head, their Lordships give a very accurate statement of the Corn Laws from the earliest times to the present, with many judicious remarks upon their tendency and defects, and suggest such amendments and further provisions as appear to them wanting for the improvement of these laws; which, on the plan their Lordships are pleased to adopt, appear to us to be in general well calculated to produce the ends in view.

We take the liberty to set down, for the consideration of the Chamber, the particular regulations advised by their Lordships, with such observations thereon as occur to us; in which, we will not presume to urge any further our objections to the *principle* of the proposed law, but shall only humbly suggest such alterations as appear to us best calculated to accommodate the plan proposed to the circumstances of the country in general, and this part of it in particular.

1st, "That England continue to be divided into districts, according to the plan of the act of last session; and that Scotland be divided into districts in like manner."

In our last report, we expressed our earnest wish to be put under the same law with England, rather than continue under a different system, though apparently for the present more advantageous to us; and the Chamber will be pleased to find our sentiments so perfectly agreeable to the opinion of the Right Honourable Advisers of these regulations.

It gives us pleasure too, to be able to inform the Chamber, that in the act of last session, such attention appears to have been paid to the similarity of the circumstances of the counties thrown together into the same district, that in several instances, these districts consist of no more than two counties; and even one county, that of Norfolk, forms a district by itself.—As we cannot doubt of the same attention being paid to our situation and circumstances, we beg leave to suggest, as in our former report, that it would best suit this part of the country, to have the counties of Lanark, Renfrew, and Dumbarton, classed into one district;—that we should have no objection to the counties of Argyle and Bute being classed along with us, if it be agreeable to the noblemen, gentlemen, and inhabitants of these two counties;—and, for greater security against evasion, Ayrshire, though a plentiful corn county, might also be added, so as to take in the whole Frith of Clyde; regulating the importation and exportation, by an average of the market prices at Glasgow, Paisley, Dumbarton, Inveraray, Rothsay, and Ayr, or such of them as make regular returns.—But we are decidedly of opinion, that extending our district any further, especially to the southward, would always occasion very high prices in these counties, and would often be productive of dearth, and consequent distress and ruin to our manufactures.

2d, “ That whenever the export of any sort of Corn is stopped in any one district, because the price thereof is above the export price, Corn of the same sort, should not be allowed to be carried from thence coastwise to any other district, the ports of which are open for the exportation thereof.”

3d, "That the act of 10 Geo. III. c. 39, for registering the prices of Corn, so far as relates to the appointment of Inspectors, be repealed, and that the registry of Corn, published weekly in the Gazette, be formed upon the averages taken, according to the prices returned by the Inspectors appointed under the act of last year."

4th, "That a duty of one halfpenny per last be paid on all British Corn imported coastwise, and one penny per last on all Corn imported from foreign countries into all the ports of Great Britain, as is now paid in the port of London; and that the money arising from these duties, be made a fund for the payment of the Inspectors, and defraying the other expences incurred by this act; and that the Corn returns sent by the post be not subject to the payment of postage."

5th, "That the Inspectors be paid, not by salaries, as directed by the act of last year, but by a certain allowance for each return, certified to have been properly made by the Receiver of Corn returns, according to the act of the 10th year of your Majesty's reign, c. 39."

These four regulations appear obviously intended for necessary and beneficial purposes.

6th, "That, in case the returns from any district shall not be completely made, according to the directions of the act, the importation and exportation of every sort of Corn in that district shall be governed by the average price of the rest of the kingdom."

We cannot help being apprehensive, that this regulation, which is intended to secure the regular execution of the law, might open a door for evasion, and sometimes, even without design, occasion much distress.—The average prices of this, and several other districts, are generally above those of the country at large.—If therefore this regulation was adopted, an intentional, or even an accidental neglect in any one of the towns, appointed to make the regular returns, would always subject us to the inconvenience of a dearth, and sometimes to greater calamities, before we could, by law, import the necessary supplies; and it can scarcely be supposed, considering how many different places must make returns, and how very often these returns are to be made; but that, independent of intended evasion, the miscarriage of letters or other accidents, will occasion some, nay frequent irregularities; and we cannot but be seriously apprehensive of the consequences.—Besides, it is putting it in the power of any one of the towns, appointed to make the returns, entirely to frustrate the intention of the act, without the others having it in their power to prevent it, as, by withholding their return, they force the importation and exportation of that district to be governed by the general average of the kingdom, instead of the average of the district itself, as prescribed by the act.—We would therefore humbly propose, that, in every such case, the importation and exportation, in each district, should be regulated by an average of the returns actually made; and it does not occur, that any dangerous consequences could follow.—Those guilty of a wilful neglect may be subjected to a penalty; but it would be not only a great hardship to make the innocent and regular suffer for the negligence of others, over whom they have no controul, but extremely dangerous to the comfort and safety of many parts of the kingdom.

We must, on this point, further observe, that, as there are no *regular* markets for Corn in this city, or any of the neighbouring counties, or any where, indeed, in this part of Scotland, so the requisite returns cannot be made in the same manner as in England.—It will be necessary, therefore, that some other plan be devised for this country—and the best mode that occurs to us, is, to give it in charge to a joint meeting of the Justices of the county, and Magistrates of the towns from which the returns are to be made, to be held weekly in such towns, respectively, to ascertain and make the necessary returns of the prices of Corn, by means of a jury of buyers and sellers, or on some such plan as that by which the affize of bread is regulated.

7th, “That a power be lodged in your Majesty, with the advice of your Privy Council, during the prorogation of Parliament, to prohibit, generally, the exportation from this kingdom, of any sort of Corn, and, in like manner, to permit, generally, the importation, on the low duties, of any sort of foreign Corn, whenever the average price thereof, taken from the returns of the whole kingdom, is higher than the price, at, or above which foreign Corn is allowed, by law, to be imported, if your Majesty, in your wisdom, for the public benefit, shall so think fit.

8th, “That the Collector of the Customs at every port in Great Britain do transmit, weekly, to the Receiver of Corn returns, an account of the quantity of the several sorts of Corn shipped in such port, to be carried coastwise, with the name of the ship or vessel, the name of the master, and the port or place in Great Britain to which the

Corn was intended to be carried; and also an account of the quantities of the several sorts of Corn, brought coastwise into each respective port, with the name of the ship or vessel, the name of the master, and the name of the port or place from whence it is brought; and that the said Receiver do, at the end of every three months, transmit to the Commissioners of his Majesty's Customs in England and Scotland, an account to be formed and made up in such manner, as the said Commissioners shall approve, of the quantity of the several sorts of Corn shipped, to be carried coastwise from each port, or brought coastwise into each port, respectively.

9th, "That the warehouses in which foreign Corn imported is to be lodged, under the joint lock of the King and the proprietor, according to the statute of the 13th of your Majesty's reign, c. 43. be provided at the public expence; and that the officers of the Customs, whose duty it is to attend these warehouses, be paid by the public, as is now practised with respect to the warehousing of tobacco.

10th, "That foreign Corn imported, and not warehoused, be not allowed again to be exported."

These appear to be all proper and necessary regulations.—It will particularly give the Chamber pleasure to observe, that the warehouses proposed by the 9th regulation, form one step towards making this country a granary for the supply not only of this, but of foreign markets—an event most devoutly to be wished for, by every friend to the prosperity of

these kingdoms.—The reason given by their Lordships, for this part of the proposed regulations, merits every attention—"There is," say they, "no regulation in our system of the Corn Laws that is more beneficial and more deserves to be extended and improved, than these provisions which permit the warehousing of foreign Corn—This regulation tends to secure to us a very important branch of commerce—it enables our merchants, who receive Corn from the Americans in payment of their debts, to lodge it here, either for the home or foreign market, as occasion may require—it is also the only method of forming magazines of a public nature in this country, against times of scarcity and distress, without prejudice to the British farmer and grower of Corn—if the legislature have thought it prudent to pay for the warehouses in which tobacco is deposited, and the charges of the officers who are appointed to attend these warehouses, it is reasonable that the public revenue should defray the like expence in support of a trade which may in time prove more valuable than that of tobacco, and may become necessary, in certain contingencies, for the subsistence of your Majesty's subjects; and from what has been already experienced in the case of tobacco, the Committee have reason to believe that this expence will be no considerable burthen to the revenue."

11th, "That Corn so warehoused be permitted to be taken out, to be ground by the importer or proprietor, on condition that he give bond, not subject to any stamp duty, in double the value of the said Corn; that he will export from the port where it was warehoused, within two calender months from the time of taking out the said Corn, a quantity

of flour equal to the quantity of Corn so taken out, reckoning the quantity of Wheat-meal, or other ground Corn, for every bushel of such Corn unground, according to the proportion as it is now settled by law; or that he will pay the duty chargeable on the said Corn at the time that it was taken out of the warehouse—And that no importer or proprietor shall be entitled to the receipt of any bounty on any Corn or flour exported by him, until after he has settled his account of the Corn so taken out of the warehouse, and discharged his bond.”

Here we beg leave to suggest, that an alternative might with advantage be permitted, either to export, as in the regulations, or to return the produce when ground into the warehouse, to remain subject to the same restrictions and regulations, and for the same purposes as if it had been imported and warehoused in that state—This would often enable the proprietor to prevent damage to his property from heat, or other unfavourable circumstances, and does not appear liable to any abuse—We have observed, that this article is stated more generally in the resolutions of the Committee of the House of Commons, and hope that in specifying the conditions and limitations meant to be annexed to it, this particular will be attended to.

12th, “That wheat be permitted to be exported, but without bounty, when the price thereof is between 44s. and 46s. and other Corn when the prices thereof shall be in like proportion; and that Wheat be allowed to be imported into this kingdom, from your Majesty’s kingdom of Ireland only, on the low duties,

when the price thereof is at or above 46s. and other sorts of Corn when the prices shall be in like proportion.

“The two regulations contained in this proposition to take place, whenever the Parliament of Ireland shall make a regulation with respect to British Corn, similar to the last in favour of Irish Corn.”

Their Lordships introduce this article as a “proposition of importance, which they submit with greater diffidence than any of the preceding; and which they only venture to suggest, in order that it may be taken into consideration.”—We are sorry to observe, that this important proposition, so wisely calculated for the benefit of all parts of the country, does not appear in the resolutions of the Committee of the House of Commons—We subjoin the reasons which induced their Lordships to suggest it, than which no reasoning can be more conclusive. “The Committee are inclined to think, that these regulations are both beneficial in themselves; but they have coupled them together, as they think that the one is calculated to counteract any evil which may be supposed to arise from the other—The great Corn counties of Great Britain are in general on the east side of the island, and there Corn is in general cheapest. The capital is fortunately situated in the midst of them: But many of the great manufacturing counties and towns are on the opposite side of the island, and there Corn is generally dearest—The first of these regulations will be beneficial to the Corn counties on the east side of the island; the last of these regulations will be beneficial to the populous and manufacturing counties and towns on the west side of the island, which are more conveniently situated for importa-

tion from Ireland; and both regulations taken together, will contribute to bring the price of Corn in the different parts of the kingdom more to a level.

“ It is not probable that any great quantity will be exported without bounty, unless when Corn is much dearer in foreign countries than here, a contingency which may sometimes, but does not often happen; and there is little reason to apprehend that the importation of Irish Corn into the western counties of this kingdom will discourage the agriculture of them, as much less Corn is grown there than is consumed by the inhabitants, and the price of it is consequently high.”

It here merits particular observation, that the value of the average of Corn imported into Britain and Ireland exceeds the exportation from both countries, as appears from the tables annexed to their Lordships representation, by a very considerable sum; so that Britain requires not only the whole Corn produced at home, but all that Ireland can spare, and a great deal more, to supply its inhabitants.—A fact, which (to say nothing more about the bounty) proves at once the increasing population and consumption of Britain, and the propriety and expediency of the proposed freedom of intercourse with Ireland.

Their Lordships lastly advise, in order to bring the whole Corn Laws within as narrow a compass as possible, that the act of the 13th of his Majesty and the act now proposed should comprehend all the regulations that are allowed to subsist, or that even these two acts should be consolidated.—And we are happy to observe, that the Committee of the House of Commons have adopted this last alternative.

Upon consideration of the whole, we would advise this Chamber to present to their Lordships a memorial, expressing our sense of the important service rendered to their country, by their able and elaborate representation; and stating shortly, and with all deference and respect, our objections to the principle of the present laws; but declaring our willingness to acquiesce in any law, which shall be thought proper for England, with such difference as our local circumstances shall appear to require; and humbly submitting to their Lordships consideration, the observations made, and alterations suggested on the articles proposed as the basis of the new law.

In that memorial it will be proper to bring particularly into view, the grievance which the inhabitants of this country labour under, from the clause in the act of the 13th of his present Majesty, c. 43, respecting Oatmeal; which, though fully explained in our former reports, we take the liberty to state again to the Chamber.—By that act, the importation of all kinds of Corn is regulated by the same prices, both in England and Scotland, and, in particular, Oats are thereby importable at the low duties, whenever the price is at or above 16s. per quarter;—in consequence whereof, Oatmeal may be imported into England, and very great quantities are actually imported into the counties of Lancaster, Chester, and Cumberland, at the low duties, whenever Oats come to that price;—but in Scotland, and it is there only that Oatmeal is separately regulated, the import price was raised by said act, from 13s. 4d. per boll, corresponding nearly to 16s. per quarter of Oats, to no less than 16s. per boll;—and to add to this grievance, while every other kind of Grain may be im-

ported at the low duties, when the prices are at or above the rates affixed to them, Oatmeal cannot be imported till it *exceed* the above-mentioned enhanced price of 16s. per boll;—and though every other kind of Grain arriving at a shut port may be warehoused till it open, Oatmeal is not permitted to be warehoused in any case. In these particulars the law operates so very unequally, and bears so hard on this country, that a bare recital of the grievance, must, we are persuaded, be sufficient to interest their Lordships, to use their good offices to have it corrected; without which the law cannot be made the same over the whole united kingdom.

It may be further observed, as another view of this inequality, that whenever Wheat may be imported at the low duties, in consequence of its price being at or above 48s. per quarter, Wheat-Flour, the bread of the greatest part of England, may also be imported at a duty of twopence per hundred weight, which is just equal to sixpence per quarter, the low duty on Wheat.—By the same rule, whenever Oats may be imported at the low duties, by the price thereof being at or above 16s. per quarter, Oatmeal is importable into England, and ought also to be importable into Scotland, at an equally low duty, or at the price of about 13s. 4d. per boll, of eight stone Dutch weight, or nearly 140 lb. English; but this is so far from being the case, that Oatmeal, the bread of the poor, the labourer, and the manufacturer in Scotland, cannot be there imported, till, (as already mentioned,) it exceed 16s. per boll, which has precisely the same effect with a duty against this country, of no less than 2s. 8d. per boll, or about 2s. 1d. per cwt. while Wheat Flour may be imported at *twopence* duty on the same quantity.—The inhabitants of Scotland demand only equality, and we have

full confidence in their title as British subjects, as well as in the wisdom and justice of Parliament, that they will now be put, in that respect, on the same footing with their fellow-subjects of England.

We have only further to beg leave to mention an improvement suggested in our last report, which appears to us calculated to save expence to the merchant, without interfering with the farmer; namely, that vessels with Corn or Meal intended for a port, which, on arrival, is found shut against importation at the low duties, should be permitted, even after being reported at the Customhouse, to proceed to an open district, and there to dispose of the cargo, without the necessity of landing or re-exportation; and that warehoused Grain and Meal should be allowed to be shipped coastwise, or by inland navigations, for the same purpose.

Archibald Grahame.

Peter Murdoch.

John Laurie.

Gilbert Hamilton.

Glasgow, 9th April, 1790.

At a Meeting of the DIRECTORS of the CHAMBER of COMMERCE and MANUFACTURES, established by Royal Charter, in this City, held this day in the Tontine Tavern,

ARCHIBALD GRAHAME, Esq; in the Chair.

The Meeting having heard and considered the representation made to his Majesty, by the Right Honourable the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade, on the present state of the Corn Laws, and the provisions proposed by them for amending and improving these Laws, together with the foregoing Report on that subject,

Resolved, That the said Report be, and is hereby, approved of, and ordered to be printed.

Extracted from the minutes of the Chamber,

Gilbert Hamilton, Secretary.

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